

INAUGURAL ADDRESS
OF
HON. ROBERT S. RANTOUL,
MAYOR
OF THE
CITY OF SALEM,
TO THE
CITY COUNCIL,

JANUARY, 1892.



SALEM:

THE SALEM PRESS PUBLISHING AND PRINTING CO.

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CITY OF SALEM,
January 4, 1892. }

Resolved:

That the thanks of the City Council be tendered to the Mayor, for his able and instructive address, and that a copy of it be requested for publication with the municipal documents.

IN COMMON COUNCIL, Jan. 4, 1892.

Adopted and sent up for concurrence.

WM. F. M. COLLINS, *Clerk.*

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN,
January 4, 1892. }

Adopted in concurrence.

HENRY M. MEEK, *City Clerk.*



MAYOR'S ADDRESS.

Gentlemen of the City Council:

The oath which we have taken is no empty form. By it, standing in full sight of all the people, and invoking the sanction of Heaven upon the most solemn form of personal undertaking, we bind ourselves, each to the other and all to all, to forego for a year our private interests and convenience so far as they conflict with public duty, and to give ourselves up heartily and with entire devotion to the honorable task of ministering to our neighbors.

Little can be said bearing upon the future which can have the stamp of definiteness and detail, because it is not given us to see with definiteness and detail what the future may demand. It is enough if, by a few passing reflections upon the record of the year just closed, we may foreshadow the principles likely to control us in the year which is to come.

CITY FINANCES.

The financial condition of the city is sound and healthy. Much to my regret the tax rate rose from \$17 per thousand in 1890 to \$18 per thousand in 1891,—a figure it had never reached before save once in the history of the city, and then through some temporary disturbance of our fiscal policy in 1873. But the people of Salem well knew that an unusual effort had been made throughout the year by men of the highest financial integrity and knowledge to keep the tax rate as low as possible. For this effort we had every motive which could be suggested by industrial depression, by pledges of economy honestly assumed, and by the general desire to invite enterprises from abroad in search of a domicile to settle here. The people of Salem well knew that the unfortunate accumulation of their fiscal burthen could not have been escaped except through processes of manipulating the public credit to which they have no inclination to resort. The true explanation, involving no discredit to anybody, was put before them and it was believed. I need only add that steps are already in train for making it impossible that such an embarrassment should occur again. The city of Newburyport, the city of Chelsea, the city of

Worcester, have already availed themselves of the legislative relief for which we ask, and which will doubtless, in a few weeks, be afforded us.

Municipal obligations have matured and have been discharged during the year by actual payment as follows:—

January 1, 1891, 6 per cent.

20 year bonds, \$300,000

June 1, 1891, 4 per cent. 30

year bonds, 8,000

July 1, 1891, 4 per cent. 10

and 20 year bonds, 9,000

November 30, 1891, 4 per

cent. 10 year bonds, 56,000

Making a total indebtedness disposed of by actual payments } amounting to \$373,000

Against which total may be offset the 4 per cent. ten year loan, issued for the cost of Canal street, amounting to \$60,000. Some small items of expenditure incurred for sewerage might very properly be funded in a twenty year loan, under the general act, should larger sums be called for during the current year, to which the small items incurred could well be added.

The debt limit imposed by statute is well in advance of our present indebtedness. Few cities of this or any other commonwealth have been more successful in holding their debt limit at a respectful distance.

Before dismissing the subject of finance it may be proper to say that while no efforts have been spared, whether in the finance committee or in the various departments, to limit city expenditures to legitimate needs, and to secure the best returns for every dollar put into our hands to spend, some of the items which taxpayers are called upon to confront are needlessly large, and, in spite of our efforts, will increase. Some items of expenditure will continue to increase by the volition of the people, such as street lighting and the expenses of the Board of Health. Others will be increased through the operation of causes over which we have no sort of control. Such are the cost of military aid, the relief of the out-of-door poor, and the sending of habitual drunkards to the insane asylum at Danvers. The damages recovered for personal injuries caused by defects in the streets have been reduced to a minimum through the vigilance and energy of the officers having the matter in charge, and it is getting to be understood that the city will not respond to claims for dam-

ages except in cases of injury actually sustained.

I respectfully recommend that a time be fixed by ordinance, at which, at least once a year, all bonds and securities held for the protection of the city against loss, shall be examined as to their sufficiency by the Board of Aldermen.

If the business of the coming year, especially such branches of it as lead up to large expenditures of money, and other branches of it which are matters of yearly routine, like school house repairs, could be more promptly set on foot, I am persuaded that some advantage would accrue. Tomorrow morning the government of 1892 will be organized for work. Forty earnest, busy men cannot be expected to reach an agreement on any important matter in a day. Time must be allowed them or their conclusions will not command respect. If financial schemes of magnitude could be entered upon at once and disposed of in the first two months of the year, the annual appropriations, which are made up in March, would more nearly represent the actual outlay to be called for during the year, and the months of April, May, and June would be available in placing any needful loans upon the market. After the July dividends have produced their annual stringency in money, which is followed by the drain of moving

the wool and cotton crops in August and the cereals in September and October, the financial year is not likely to offer chances so good as in the earlier months for the sale of city securities.

POLICE MATTERS.

The Police Department has received this year, as heretofore, a large share of attention, and is believed to be in a generally satisfactory state. It is entirely unfair to hold the Mayor responsible any longer for the selection of officers. He has only the power of nomination under the charter, and by an abuse of the power of confirmation, placed by the charter in the Board of Aldermen, the best nominations he can make may be persistently rejected, if for reasons of their own the Board of Aldermen desire to prevent the removal of an incumbent. But this is not all. Instead of permitting the Mayor to name for the office the best man he can find, the present law requires him to select from a very limited list of persons, some of whom are not well qualified, furnished him by a state commission. In filling three vacancies the Mayor is entitled by law to five names. Never in the past two years has the commission been able to furnish me the number of examined men to which the law entitled me, and I have been for-

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bidden to go outside the list. The tests applied may be of value in excluding illiteracy and in protecting the appointing power against importunity. They are of no value in assuring the appointee some of the essential elements of success, and should only be applied in a negative way to bar out unfitness, leaving the appointing power free to select without dictation from the whole list of applicants approved by the Examining Board.

The loss of \$4000 in the receipts of the Police Department this year is a serious one. It is due to State legislation of which the expediency is as yet doubtful, and a longer trial will be necessary to determine whether the change is for the better or worse. A new station house is imperatively demanded. No one is more entitled to urge this fact upon your attention than the City Marshal and the statements embodied in his report are not overdrawn.

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS.

The re-establishment of the office of Superintendent of Schools seems to me to be a step in advance in our school system. A few months are not enough to fully demonstrate its wisdom, yet I find a very general conviction abroad that the step is commanding itself. Our schools are not inferior,

but there is room for improvement in their methods, and I look for much practical help from the intelligent criticisms of the superintendent.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

Several of the school buildings are far from what they should be. The High School building is frequently condemned, yet I see no immediate prospect of superseding it. It is extremely well located, light, airy, and removed from noise. The school, in my judgment, needs other changes besides a change of domicile, and other schools are in more imperative need of new housing. The condition of the Browne school house is very faulty. The Lincoln school house in Fowler street cannot last much longer; and whenever it is condemned a new adjustment of school districts is likely to follow. The Endicott school house is outgrown, and its location is objectionable from the noise and danger to which the proximity of a great thoroughfare exposes its attendants. The section which it serves has a natural limit on one side in the Peabody line and on another in the canal and railroad tracks, but it is growing rapidly on its remaining lines. The solution of the problem would seem to be to build, on the side of Gallows Hill, high enough to command light and air, a large school house which

shall accommodate that growing section. From eleven to twelve hundred feet is the approved radius of the circle which a primary school ought to provide for, and it will be found easy to readjust the district lines between the Peabody line and Washington street on a better plan than the present, whenever the Fowler street school house, now forty-one years old, shall disappear.

OTHER SCHOOL MATTERS.

It is a pleasing duty to call attention to the noble efforts made by our distinguished townsman, Mr. Ross Turner, to give direction to the art-in-instinct of the school children of Salem, and also to the splendid liberality with which the venerable Abiel Abbot Low has contributed to the educational equipment of his native city. The efforts of Mr. James B. Curwen in behalf of manual training are beginning to bear fruit, and are much appreciated. I deem it also my duty to call attention to a process for nominating the standing committees of the year now in use in the School Board, which seems to me objectionable. The rules of the Board provide for a nominating committee of three members whose duty it is to submit for consideration a list of standing committees. This list may be accepted or rejected by ballot of the Board. This is

a fair and legitimate method of selecting permanent committees. But the nominating committee should be selected wholly by the Board, and the Mayor should be excluded from the selection on the general ground accepted in all parliamentary bodies that a presiding officer is to be removed as far as possible from all duties of which personal selection forms a part. The single exception is the case where it is found expedient to put upon the presiding officer the whole duty and responsibility of appointing committees. The rule of the School Board makes the Mayor an *ex officio* member and the mouthpiece of this nominating committee of three. He must offer a report which he may not approve, and may be voted down first in the Committee and again in the School Board. The charter does not intend—the sentiment of Salem cannot approve this.

PORABLE BOOTHS AND THE VOTING SYSTEM.

The new mode of voting, lately introduced, commends itself very generally to public favor. But it is open to amendment. One or more portable voting booths should be provided, which can be set up either on vacant lots or in the streets, thus securing a central location at little or no cost in every precinct. The law provides for thirty days' notice

before election day of the location of a voting place. To lease a well-located and convenient building for thirty days, provided such a building can always be found and leased in each precinct, is a proceeding attended with no little expense. And the locations heretofore secured have not escaped criticism.

Officials who are privileged to re-examine the work of the voters and precinct officers done at the polls will not fail to be impressed with the accurate, intelligent and business-like method for the most part exhibited therein. Of a total registration of 4924 possible voters, nearly 4300 of them at the last election expressed their preferences at the polls, and the very rare occurrence of anything indicating lack of definite purpose, illiteracy, or incapacity of any kind, furnishes an object lesson in popular government which no thoughtful citizen will overlook.

THE WATER WORKS.

The water works last year came under the control of a Board made up in a new and somewhat experimental manner, and while I see nothing which calls for comment, it would be wise to suspend judgment on it at least until a second Board, created under the new ordinance, shall have tested its

working. The exceptionally low water at the lake has been wisely and promptly availed of for cleansing purposes, and I have no doubt that under the new powers obtained from the Legislature last year, the Board will be able to do all that is called for to secure the absolute purity of this delicious supply.

Apprehension is sometimes expressed that the main near Essex Bridge, which was laid before the system of water-proof coating had demonstrated its value, and is not of full weight of metal at some points, may be in a condition which threatens a sudden failure. By the laying of the new main on the Danvers side of the city, we have made it possible to open a section of this defective pipe and ascertain its exact condition, and I respectfully suggest the expediency of such action.

I can see no reason why our water works should not be made more nearly self-supporting.

THE SEWAGE QUESTION.

The matter of sewage is one which will not take care of itself, and, except at a certain season about the middle of the municipal year, it gets little attention. This is unfortunate, because the natural result will be that sooner or later the patience of the community will become exhausted; panic and passion will usurp the place of good sense, and

some heroic measure may be invoked which will cost more and effect less than a wiser course of action. I think it is clear that there should be a sewer in Webb street. I think it is clear that we are right in hastening the disappearance of the Pond street basin. The *status* of the Mill pond difficulty seems to be a little more hopeful. But the great causes of discomfort and discouragement to property owners still remain to be attacked. The North River and the South River have sunk from the rank of the health-giving and beautiful water-courses they were to that of noisome purveyors of unwholesome filth. No effective steps can in my judgment be taken looking to complete relief, except with the concurrent action of Beverly, Peabody, and Marblehead. The natural mode of securing such action is through the intervention of the State, and it may be none too soon to apply to the Legislature for an act establishing a commission of which one member shall be an expert appointed by the State, and to which Salem, Beverly, Peabody and Marblehead shall each add a member of their own choosing, the purpose of which commission shall be to mature and submit, with the concurrence of the towns involved, a system of sewerage embodied in an act like those

which have been passed for the relief of Boston and adjoining towns.

POOR DEPARTMENT.

The admirable report of the Board of Overseers of the Poor, while it must encourage every well-wisher of his kind with its record of untiring and well-directed effort, at the same time will not fail to dishearten the thoughtful reader at the hopeless retrograde which mendicancy has assumed. The increasing necessities of actual distress create increased opportunity for imposture and fraud. I commend the report, without comment on its painful revelations, to the serious examination of every citizen. Had the winter now passing been exceptionally severe, instead of exceptional in its moderate demands on clothing and fuel funds, the problems set for the Poor Department to solve would have been very much more serious than they are. The aid promised us through a new voluntary relief organization, to be known as the Associated Charities of Salem, is timely and could never be more welcome.

LICENSE SYSTEM.

The system of territorial limitation in the issue of licenses for the sale of intoxicants, which I

found in vogue on assuming the chair, has been continued with the entire approval of the Police Department and of myself. I sincerely hope it will be maintained for the coming year. That it does not prevent drunkenness we know too well, but it brings it a little more under control than any substitute known to me is likely to do, and rids portions of the town of the nuisance altogether. I hail the dawning of a better sentiment amongst those citizens who justly estimate the burthensome and degrading evils of intoxication—the dawn of a sentiment which welcomes all honest effort for surpressing these evils, upon whatever theory the effort may proceed, and which will look more to moral agencies and less to law to accomplish ends which law is utterly powerless to effect.

PUBLIC LIBRARY.

The Public Library once more commends itself, through its comprehensive reports, to the full favor of the people of Salem. It has lost in Mr. Horton an early, constant, and judicious friend, an intelligent champion, an officer wise, sagacious and devoted. It is still in receipt of gifts from persons interested in the past or future of Salem, and in the general progress and enlightenment of the human mind. Its growth, so inspiring and delightful to

all its friends, has been so unexpectedly great that we are already making provision for an enlargement in the rear of the building, and the nucleus of a building fund for this purpose has already attained encouraging proportions.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS.

Of the work of several of the great departments of the city it is neither necessary to speak in detail nor possible in the time allowed me. The exhaustive character of their reports makes it needless to do so. The public have not failed to observe with satisfaction the thorough work of the Board of Health, of the Street Department, of the Shade Trees and Public Property committees, of the city clerk's and city treasurer's offices, of the Fire Department and of the Water Board. On all of these it would be timely and agreeable to comment at some length, but the limits of an annual address forbid.

FIRE DEPARTMENT.

The need of a new hook and ladder truck seems to me imperative, and I do not understand that the addition necessarily involves a new station nor an increase in the number of horses kept. It seems to me to be poor economy to provide but one equipment of this kind for a city of our size, which, in case of

two considerable conflagrations breaking out at the same time, would never forgive herself for the devastation which might result. The department generally is in a good condition of discipline and efficiency. Commendations of the manner in which fires are controlled reach me from unprejudiced sources which I cannot but respect. But if the standard attained is high, constant watchfulness alone will maintain it. There are imperfections, some of which have long been recognized, but the remedy is not yet discovered. The method of appointment I am sure is faulty.

It results in a minute subdivision of responsibility for appointments which is equivalent to no responsibility at all. The charter provides that appointments made by the Mayor and Aldermen shall be upon the exclusive nomination of the Mayor, approved by the Aldermen, and chapter 323 of the acts of 1867 confirms to the city of Salem the general powers in this behalf conferred from time immemorial in the Revised and in the General Statutes of the Commonwealth, and also adds in terms that "the appointment of engine men, hose men, and hook-and-ladder men shall be made by the Mayor and Aldermen exclusively." In direct contravention of this law the ordinances provide that "the Board of Engineers shall present to the Mayor

and Aldermen the names of such persons as they see fit to recommend for appointment as members of fire companies, and the Mayor and Aldermen shall within ten days appoint or reject said persons." If the Board of Engineers is the proper body to select firemen, the duty should rest on them and with it the responsibility for the selection. I need not say that no Mayor worthy of his place will nominate to the Board of Aldermen a candidate for an engine company unsatisfactory to himself, simply because the Board of Engineers have by a vote of three to two seen fit to recommend him. Since the Mayor can under the ordinances nominate no candidate who has not this recommendation of the Engineers, it is easy to see how serious delays and embarrassments may be encountered. I commend this matter to the early attention of the City Council. It is an arrangement which is indefensible in theory and very likely to lead to trouble.

Our department enjoys so high a reputation amongst our neighbors that it is constantly invited to leave town, and I respectfully suggest that the point may have been reached when it would be well to provide a special detail for out-of-town relief and to require the Chief Engineer to remain in Salem at all times when on duty.

I have the honor to call attention again to the

propriety of extending the requirement for fire-proof roofing over an area considerably larger than that now covered. Mineral and metallic applications are now in use, scarcely if at all more costly or heavier than wood.

STREET SPRINKLING.

Street sprinkling, which was an experiment last year, is now a recognized necessity. It was not to be expected that the very best results could be reached on a first attempt, and it is to be remembered that the act under which the city was empowered to assume the work did not take effect until April 10th, when the season was far advanced. Notwithstanding all the drawbacks encountered, very general satisfaction was experienced, and if the system can be still further perfected this year, and put in operation early and extended to other streets, I think the moderate cost of it will be gladly borne.

ELECTRIC LIGHTING.

The system of street lighting is in a state of transition from oil and gas to electricity. In adapting this new force to service in the useful arts, some time must elapse before the best results can be secured. That electric lights are cleaner

and better than gas and oil needs no demonstration, and when the statement is made that they are also cheaper, it is easy to see that they will soon exclude the old forms of street lighting. As between the arc system, which focuses a strong light at one point, and the incandescent system, which diffuses a mild light more evenly and agreeably, it is not yet possible to lay down rigid laws which shall control in every case. The committee of last year have proceeded with great good judgment and caution, and, as I believe, with entire success, to substitute, at a considerable saving of cost, incandescent lights in some cases for arc lights and in others for gas and oil; retaining and introducing arc lights wherever that course seemed expedient, —making a new contract for one hundred and sixty arc lights to run for three years from the first of December last, and lighting a section of Ward Five on the new plan, so as to invite comment before committing themselves to radical changes on a more comprehensive scale. I bespeak for this interesting and hopeful experiment your most hospitable consideration.

OUR STREETS.

The Street Department finds a valuable adjunct in the steam roller lately purchased, and the qual-

ity of surface now attainable with broken stone will, in my judgment, make it undesirable, save in a few exceptional cases, to continue to any great extent at present the substitution of block paving for McAdam.

I respectfully recommend that the road roller be used in the night time, when employed on the leading avenues of the city, except in sections where the stream of travel can be diverted temporarily into side streets from the thoroughfare obstructed by the operations of the Street Department.

Plans for the widening of the northern end of Bridge street and of the southern end of Lafayette street have been for some time under consideration, and in my judgment the public interests will not be served by longer delay. The condition of the South bridge and its surroundings should be your first concern. No more time ought properly to elapse, beyond that needed to decide upon an expedient course of action, before the present bridge shall disappear, a safe transit across the river be provided, the deposit of dock-slime and sewage now going on there be checked, and land owners on the east be enabled to sell or build, through knowing where the street line is finally to be. My views upon these matters and upon the

need of a street covering the river between Washington and Lafayette streets are well known and need not be reiterated here.

UNSIGHTLY POLES.

Just at the time when public attention is fully awake to the care and multiplication of shade trees, the beauty of our streets is threatened by a new invasion. There will be little encouragement for citizens to build fine residences and ornament their grounds, if private corporations, necessarily more or less jealous of each other, however well-disposed they may be to serve the public, are to be allowed, without any common source of authority to control and check their operations, to disfigure our streets with unsightly sticks of timber, multiplied with no limit but their own convenience. The natural repository of authority over the city streets is the Board of Aldermen. The Aldermen must be the final tribunal between all parties claiming privileges in the streets and the people. Between the Aldermen and corporations, however indispensable, there must be no divided empire in the streets of Salem. Either the Aldermen are supreme, and parties using the streets are to do so under their direction, or there is no control of the streets, because corporations seeking to override the

Aldermen's control will not agree amongst themselves. The remedy for the encroachments of private corporations will not be found in selling or leasing rights absolute in their nature but limited as to time, nor in making the city a partner in the business of transportation, however lucrative it may become. The remedy will be found in strengthening the hands of city and town governments, and in raising them through careful selection at the polls to a quality equal to their important functions.

GRAVEL SUPPLY.

An imperative need of Salem is cheap gravel. No supply can hereafter be looked for near the points where it is needed. It must be moved on temporary tracks to points on the street railway lines and delivered over those lines between the hours of midnight and daybreak. The enormous cost of transportation in tip-carts, and the great need of fresh gravel to fill unwholesome depressions, and regrade and construct highways, impel me again to call attention to this important matter.

BOARD OF WORKS.

But perhaps the most imperative need of the city at present is some common repository of information and power, where proposed changes can be considered in their relative bearings on each

other, and marshalled according to their relative importance. It is not necessary to presume antagonism nor jealousy between different departments in order to account for the fact that great waste now occurs through ignorance in one department of the purposes of another. If we had a Board of Works, as the cities of New Bedford and Newton have, consisting of three unpaid officials, each chosen for three years and one retiring each year, the city would at last have a continuous policy, street lines would be laid down in advance, and new streets and street widenings could be anticipated by those who intend to build, houses would not be placed where water pipes and sewers could not be laid to reach them, streets just put in order by one department would not be dug up by another, and changes in public buildings would not be made one year to be restored the next. At present the Mayor is the only official who can possibly get a view of what is going on in all the departments. None of them are bound to give him information of their plans, and the veto power is a remedy to be used but sparingly.

MONUMENTS AND RECORDS.

A committee on Monuments and Records was for the first time appointed last year. This was done at my suggestion, and while I see no occasion for

making such an organization permanent, I think it should be continued for at least another year, and until other work has been accomplished similar to that in which it has so successfully engaged. Small amounts of money, judiciously directed by a committee of this character, will be found to produce returns entirely satisfactory to the people who are taxed to pay them. The indexing of the mass of City Records and files of loose documents has made encouraging progress under the eye of the City Clerk, and has already developed important results, and it is highly desirable that it be continued and completed.

PORTRAITS IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

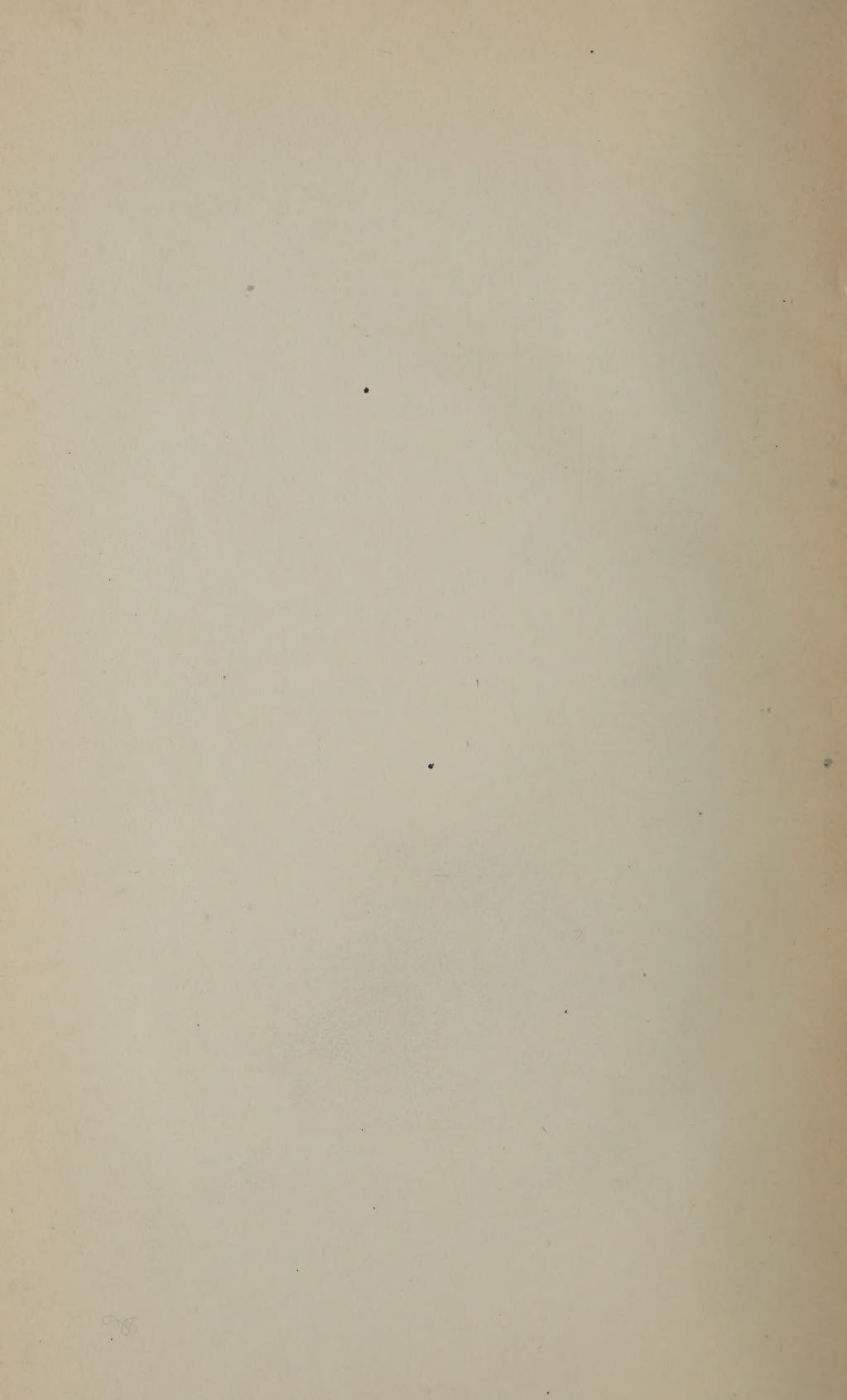
Within a few months past one of our public spirited citizens has placed upon the walls of this chamber an exceptionally fine portrait of Andrew Jackson. The circumstance possesses a peculiar interest from the fact that, during President Jackson's administration, a surplus which had accumulated in the treasury of the United States was distributed to the states and by them to the towns and cities. Salem had just then become a city, and her share of the surplus revenue was more than enough to provide her with a City Hall, and was devoted to the erection of this building. But the fame of our seventh President needs no adven-

titious aids to make it lasting. That country must be rich indeed in great characters which could overlook the name of Andrew Jackson.

The hanging of this picture left but two vacant panels to be filled in the chamber. Two governors of Massachusetts, and only two, have lived in Salem. They were colonial governors, and it happens that they were the first and the last of the colonial governors under the old charter. It also happens that the colonial period has had no representative on any canvas which adorns either chamber of the City Hall. It seemed especially fit, therefore, that the vacant space should be reserved, if possible, for the portraits of our two colonial governors, Endecott and Bradstreet. But for the solemn event which has just saddened his family and the whole city, the liberality of our first citizen would have enabled us to greet on our walls to-day, in one of the best portraits of his ancestor, Governor Endecott, now existing, the typical features of that stern old Puritan magistrate, and I am not without hope that the distinguished descendants of Governor Bradstreet are about to claim the remaining niche for the benignant countenance of the Nestor Governor who received the sword of Andros. When duly accepted, as they will be with alacrity, these two fine pictures will nobly complete the decoration of the chamber.

Gentlemen of the City Council:—

The work of 1892 is before us. It is not for me,—it is not for any man to dictate as to its order or method. It is not more my work than your work. It is not the work of any of us in so true a sense as it is the work of the whole people of Salem. Thank God! we live in a community where a discriminating people, through chosen agents, do their own work in their own way at their own time. Thank God! there are not lacking men of integrity, of generosity, of good sense, of public spirit, to take up cheerfully and carry forward fearlessly the burthen put upon them by the free election of the people. Thank God! the sagacity of our people is a guaranty, surer than patents of nobility and hereditary titles, that public duty will rest for the most part on chosen citizens who are well fitted to sustain it.



Phillips Library



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